

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6290
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEPR PLO EG XF
SUBJECT: AHARAM EDITOR ATTACKS PLO LEADERSHIP

REF: CAIRO 6450

SUMMARY. MAJOR AHARAM EDITORIAL CASTIGATES PLO LEADERSHIP AND ALLEGIANCE TO CERTAIN CAPITALS "THROUGH WEAKNESS OR INDIFFERENCE". HOWEVER, EDITORIAL AVOIDS GOING FURTHER THAN SADAT HAS PREVIOUSLY. INDICATIONS ARE GOE WISHES TO AVOID FINAL BREAK WITH PLO. END SUMMARY.

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1. AHARAM MARCH 3 CARRIES FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL BY ACTING CHIEF EDITOR (REPLACING THE LATE YUSUF SIBAI) ALI HAMDI AL-GAMMAL ENTITLED "WE AND THE PLO". NOTING THAT "TIME HAS COME TO CAST OBJECTIVE LOOK AT OUR RELATIONS WITH PLO OR, MORE PRECISELY, WITH SELF-STYLED LEADERS OF PLO", GAMMAL LAYS OUT HISTORICAL RECORD OF

CONTINUED GOE SUPPORT FOR PLO AND CONCLUDES: "PLO LEADERS SHOULD ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR MISTAKES AND REALIZE THAT THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO CERTAIN CAPITALS IS IN SHARP CONTRAST WITH THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND TO PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WHOM THEY CLAIM TO REPRESENT".

2. GAMMAL RECALLS HOW, SINCE OCTOBER 1973 WAR, SYRIAN AND IRAQI BAATH, SOVIETS, AND COLONEL QADHAFI HAVE FOUGHT FOR DOMINATION OF PLO AND CLAIMS THAT "THROUGH WEAKNESS OR INDIFFERENCE", PLO LEADERSHIP JOINED IN CHARGES THAT EGYPT HAD SOLD OUT ARAB CAUSE AFTER FIRST AND SECOND DIS-ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS IN SINAI. PLO LEADERSHIP MISTOOK GOE SILENCE AT "SUCH MEANNESS" AS WEAKNESS, NEVER REALIZING THAT EGYPT SIMPLY "TOO BIG TO CARE". PLO LEADERSHIP SIMILARLY FAILED TO UNDERSTAND SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE, FEIGNING IGNORANCE OF FACT THAT SADAT SERVING OBJECTIVES OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. "ARAFAT NOW CLAIMS THAT EGYPT SEEKS TO RELIEVE ITSELF OF PALESTINIAN BURDEN, BUT SUCH TALK IS MERE HALLUCINATION AND REAL BURDEN IS THAT OF PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP ON PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND ON FUTURE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE."

3. COMMENT: GAMMAL EDITORIAL, DOUBTLESS OFFICIALLY INSPIRED, IS YET ANOTHER SALVO IN POST-CYPRUS MEDIA BLITZ ATTACKING PLO LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, GAMMAL BROAD-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SIDE CAREFULLY GOES NO FARTHER THAN SADAT'S NOVEMBER 29 PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SPEECH CRITICIZING "CABARET REVOLUTIONARIES": THERE NO HINT OF EITHER ALTERNATE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP TO PLO OR ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP WITHIN PLO. GAMMAL GIVES NO INDICATION AS TO HOW EGYPT SUPPOSED TO CONVINCE PLO LEADERSHIP TO MEND ITS WAYS, NOTING SIMPLY THAT "EGYPT CONSIDERS ITSELF FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND WILL NOT RELINQUISH THAT DUTY". THERE NO MENTION OF LEGISLATIVE STEPS TAKEN TO ABOLISH PALESTINIAN PRIVILEGES IN EGYPT AND DAILIES HAVE BEEN SILENT ON THIS SUBJECT SINCE ORIGINAL SALIM ANNOUNCEMENT (REFTEL). GAMMAL EDITORIAL, AND GENERAL PRESS TREATMENT OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION, GIVES IMPRESSION THAT GOE SEEKING TO AVOID FINAL BREAK WITH PLO AT CURRENT STAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, SADAT, IN INTERVIEW WITH NBC APPEARING IN LOCAL DAILIES MARCH 3, HOLDS PLO RESPONSIBLE FOR SIBAI ASSASSINATION, SINCE ALL FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATIONS BELONG TO PLO, BUT IS CAREFUL TO DENY THAT PLO PARTICIPATED AT LARNACA SHOOT-OUT, NOTING PM SALIM REPORTED TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY THAT "NO PALESTINIAN TOOK ANY PART" IN ACTION AGAINST COMMANDOS. GIVEN HIGHLY AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF LARNACA SHOOT-OUT, SADAT COULD EASILY HAVE SEIZED ON REPORTS OF

PLO COMPLICITY IN PURSUIT OF HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST PLO
LEADERSHIP. INSTEAD, HE PASSED UP OPPORTUNITY. EILTS

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